

BWC Strategy Session

Innovations in Telework: Breaking Down the Barriers

On March 3, 2005, Best Workplaces for CommutersSM (BWC) initiated its 2005 Strategy Session series to provide network members with information on common and emerging technologies that are breaking down barriers to telework. Elham Shirazi, Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT), Telework Council co-chair served as the co-moderator and described ACT, the Telework Council, as well as the other sector-specific councils, and thanked the speakers for participating. Patrice Thornton, BWC team member, provided opening administrative remarks and introduced the featured participants:

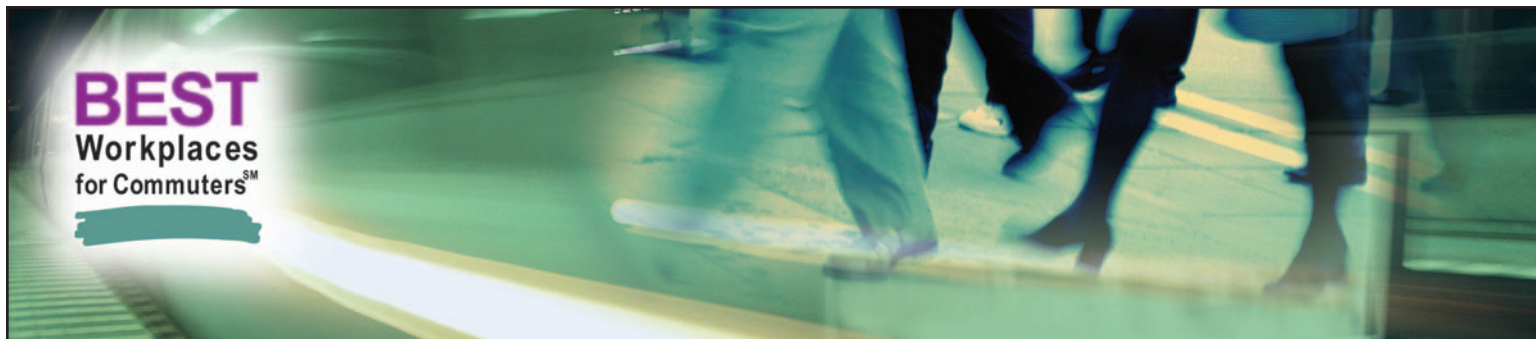
Jeremy Hopwood, president, Tsaba Networks

Mary McClintock, remote access solutions manager, Nortel Networks

- Mr. Hopwood is the president of Tsaba Networks, an Information Technology Service Provider that provides high-quality solutions to IT challenges. Mr. Hopwood discussed available technologies that enable employees to telework efficiently. Ms. McClintock of Nortel Networks offered a real-life case study on how Nortel Networks implemented its telework program and discussed some of the technological and cultural obstacles the company has encountered in the process. Complete presentations are available on the BWC Network Web site.

Open Discussion

- Patsi Davis from Texas Children's Hospital asked how many employees telework at Nortel. Ms. McClintock stated that 15 percent of Nortel's 33,000 employees telework on a regular basis.
- A participant asked about the typical types of work performed by teleworkers at Nortel. Ms. McClintock explained that employees choosing to telework are able to fulfill marketing, human resource, and call center responsibilities. In addition, Ms. McClintock provided the example of an executive manager at Nortel's Research Triangle Park work site who was assigned to a new position in Texas. Since the executive already traveled a great deal, he decided not to relocate. Instead, he simply maintains an assistant at the Texas work site and keeps in contact with the office staff via phone calls, a PBX extender, and net conferencing.
- Jennifer Paedon from the Moffett Park TMA requested more detail on Nortel's training sessions, which assist employees and managers as they adjust to telework. Ms. McClintock described two complimentary elements to the company's training program: manager training and employee training. She emphasized the importance of managers communicating with their teleworking staff in order to keep them connected to the group. In addition, managers must assign an appropriate level of work to teleworkers in order to ensure that onsite office staff



are not burdened with extra work. Ms. McClintock also emphasized that managers need to evaluate teleworkers performance based on specific work objectives rather than traditional measures, which can include regular visibility and working long hours. To accomplish this, teleworkers submit weekly reports summarizing their work or commute to the office for weekly staff meetings. Nortel's training program also incorporates skits to demonstrate these situations to managers and staff.

- Ms. McClintock noted that Nortel maintains an online list of managers that currently oversee teleworkers and asks these people to be available for questions.
- Ms. Thornton asked if Ms. McClintock would share the outline of the training session with EPA and allow the BWC Team to add the information to the online toolkit. Ms. McClintock agreed and will follow up with Ms. Thornton shortly.

- A participant asked how Nortel ensures that managers value their onsite and teleworking staff equally. Ms. McClintock stated that Nortel is developing tools to help managers manage telework staff as effectively as possible. She also pointed out that managers should not treat teleworkers any differently than other staff. Ms. McClintock added that this is not a problem at Nortel since their telework program has been in place for many years.

Closing

Ms. Thornton closed the discussion and informed the participants that a summary of the training session will be available on the BWC Web site at www.bwc.gov/support/seminars.htm. Ms. Thornton also encouraged everyone to join the BWC Network and take advantage of the tools and resources that are available to network members.